United States
Department of Justice

Guidelines

for Establishing and Operating Gang Intelligence Units and Task Forces

Prepared by
the Gang Intelligence Strategy Committee,
Global Intelligence Working Group,
Criminal Intelligence Coordinating Council,
Global Justice Information Sharing Initiative

October 2008

BJA Bureau of Justice Assistance

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About Global

The U.S. Department of Justice's Global Justice Information Sharing Initiative (Global) serves as a Federal Advisory Committee to the U.S. Attorney General on critical justice information sharing initiatives. Global promotes standards-based electronic information exchange to provide justice and public safety communities with timely, accurate, complete, and accessible information in a secure and trusted environment. Global is administered by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance.

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This project was supported by Grant No. 2007-NC-BX-K001 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Justice's Global Justice Information Sharing Initiative. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office for Victims of Crime. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Introduction

Purpose

This document was developed by the Gang Intelligence Strategy Committee (GISC), a committee under the U.S. Department of Justice's Global Justice Information Sharing Initiative's Intelligence Working Group. The GISC—composed of federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement; justice; and corrections representatives—is tasked with improving gang-related information sharing. This document provides guidance to agencies seeking to establish and operate a gang task force or gang intelligence unit within their jurisdiction or those agencies that participate in a gang task force.

Introduction

> *Once found principally in large cities, violent street gangs now affect public safety, community image, and quality of life in communities of all sizes in urban, suburban, and rural areas. No region of the United States is untouched by gangs. Gangs affect society at all levels, causing heightened fears for safety, violence, and economic costs.*[1]

There are few communities within the United States that have been untouched by gangs and gang-related crime. The damage and fear caused by these criminal organizations present a tremendous challenge for law enforcement officials charged with maintaining a safe and secure environment for local citizens.

It is virtually impossible for a law enforcement agency acting alone to adequately address the complex issues related to the gang culture. Progressive law enforcement leaders have recognized the limitations of "going it alone" and have embraced the concept of a multidisciplinary/multijurisdictional response to combating gangs in their communities. The *2005 National Gang Threat Assessment* pointed out that "advances in technology and their future exploitation by gang members will create new challenges for law enforcement. However, collaboration and the sharing of intelligence will enable agencies across the country to stay one step ahead of gangs and their criminal activity."[2] Two efficient and effective approaches to coordinating efforts across agencies and jurisdictions are the creation of a gang task force—an organized system of intelligence sharing and coordinated operations among several departments and/or agencies—and the creation of a gang intelligence unit.

When properly organized, managed, and maintained, gang task force operations and gang intelligence units have emerged as two of the best law enforcement and justice system tools for reducing gang crime and the community fear that gangs generate. According to the National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations (NAGIA): "Whether organized on a state, regional, or federal level, task forces allow for immediate information sharing, increased resources to collect and analyze gang intelligence, and additional enforcement capacity in a specific region. Task forces have allowed agencies with differing strengths to collaborate and dismantle major gangs."[3]

Since their inception, gang task force operations have resulted in numerous successes, as well as several highly publicized failures. Unfortunately, the successes are often less visible than the failures. Successful, well-performing task force operations are often transparent to the media, the law enforcement and justice professions, and the communities they serve. Failures, on the other hand, are favorite spotlight targets.

Struggling task forces can improve their chances of success by seeking out and emulating the proven strategies of existing successful task force operations. There are many examples of success across the country that can provide a valuable foundation for new task force operations, as well as an evaluation tool for established task forces.

1 National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations, *2005 National Gang Threat Assessment,* www.nagia.org/PDFs/2005_national_gang_threat_assessment.pdf.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

Chances of success can also be drastically improved by ensuring that a task force follows critical principles and has the requisite structural framework. The intent and purpose of this publication is to identify the imperative elements of effective task force operations. Successful task forces do not just happen. They are the result of considerable forethought, planning, and commitment.

General Principles

The general principles that are critical to building and maintaining a successful task force or gang intelligence unit include:

Leadership: The success of the task force depends on progressive leadership exhibited by the participating agencies, task force management, and task force personnel. The presence of this leadership is often transparent in successful task force operations; the absence of this leadership is obvious in task forces that experience failures. Successful task force operations have an underlying thread of "enlightened leaders" committed to overcoming obstacles and resolving differences. Committed task force leadership has an insatiable "can-do" attitude and will accept nothing less than the very best effort.

Commitment: The success of the task force is dependent upon the commitment of the policymakers, participating agencies, task force leadership, and the team members. Good intentions and "moral support" do little to sustain the task force in accomplishing its mission. Commitment means that everyone honors their agreements, roles, and responsibilities regarding building, staffing, and supporting the task force.

Clear Mission: The successful task force has a clear mission—a clear statement of what the task force aims to do, the overarching approach the task force will take, and the intended result of task force actions. All task force participants must agree with and support the mission statement and underlying purpose of the task force in order to achieve optimal results.

Communication: A cornerstone of the successful task force is frequent and ongoing communication. Keeping the participating agency heads and board of directors informed is a critical function. Proactive communication reduces misunderstandings and conflicts and allows agency heads to keep their organization and community abreast of task force activities. Uninformed agency heads are more likely to discontinue participation in the task force when faced with staffing dilemmas.

Direction: The successful task force receives attentive direction from the participating agencies (the control board), the task force command structure (task force leaders and supervisors), prosecutors, and team members. Are the task force investigations and activities consistent with the stated mission? Are task force enforcement activities being conducted as safely, efficiently, and ethically as possible? What is the quality of the task force work product? Proactive attention and direction by all involved decrease the likelihood that the task force will stray from its intended purpose.

Evaluation: The successful task force has established performance measures tied to its mission. Are task force activities having an impact on the stated mission? Are they meeting the expectations of the participating agencies? Does the community perceive the task force as responsive and professional?

Refinements: The successful task force practices ongoing self-evaluation and seeks opportunities for improvement. Task force leaders and team members are committed to refining task force performance whenever possible. The successful task force is committed to excellence.

Sustainability: The successful task force constantly prepares for the future in terms of fiscal stability, recognition of emerging trends, and development of personnel. Task force leaders need to be "futurists." In order to ensure task force and gang unit sustainability, leadership needs to anticipate issues and obstacles, develop strategies to mitigate the problems, and seek out and capitalize on opportunities. By being proactive, leaders embrace opportunities to "make things happen," rather than "let things happen," thereby demonstrating task force and gang unit value and contributing to sustainment of efforts.

While the principles and guidelines laid out here are intended to assist in establishing a gang task force, the concepts presented are applicable to any multidepartmental, multiagency, or multijurisdictional endeavor, including gang intelligence units.

Summary of Guidelines and Key Elements[4]

Guideline 1: Task Force Model

- Determine the scope and scale of the local gang problem.

4 The guidelines and key elements detailed in this document apply not only to gang task forces but also to agency gang intelligence units.

- Determine the response needs to address the gang problem.
- Identify the kind of task force model that is most appropriate for local response needs (from intra-agency to multijurisdictional).
- "Sell" the task force approach to local political, business, and community leaders to gain their support.

Guideline 2: Task Force Participants

- Invite participants from all levels of the justice community who have a vested interest in the gang problem.
- Establish a collaborative environment in which each participating agency has an equal voice and recognizes each entity's role in task force success.
- Invite participants from corrections agencies, probation and parole agencies, prosecutorial agencies, juvenile justice agencies, and any others with a vested interest in gang activities.

Guideline 3: Task Force Mission

- Draft a task force mission statement that identifies what the task force aims to do, the overarching approach the task force will take, and the intended result of task force actions.

Guideline 4: Task Force Design

- Determine requisite elements of the task force.
- Work with participants and key stakeholders to outline the scope and expectations of the task force.
- Conduct dialogue with other disciplines that address gang issues to identify capability redundancies, gaps, and potential support roles.
- Review design options and determine which combination of design elements is needed and feasible for the local community.

Guideline 5: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

- Draft a memorandum of understanding that defines the terms, responsibilities, relationships, strategies, and commitments of each participating entity.
- Get commitment to follow the terms of the MOU from all participating entities.
- Make a clear mission statement the cornerstone of the MOU.
- Draft written case management policies (make a part of the task force policies and procedures manual).

Guideline 6: Policies and Procedures

- Write a comprehensive task force policies and procedures manual that defines the administrative and operational framework required to execute the task force mission.
- Review the manual in its entirety, modify as appropriate, and get approval by the task force governing board on an annual basis.
- Get participant input on policies and procedures to ensure there are not conflicting agency policies and practices within task force and unit operations.
- Widely disseminate the manual and provide training on its contents.

Guideline 7: Personnel

- Select personnel who are mature, responsible, positive, and committed to achieving the task force mission.
- Identify personnel to fill all task force positions: leadership (commander/director), supervision (supervisors/managers), deputies/officers/agents, and support staff.
- Draft written personnel roles and responsibilities for every position within the task force (make a part of the task force policies and procedures manual).

Guideline 8: Data Collection

- Establish standard definitions for "gang," "gang member," and "gang-affiliated."
- Establish uniform standards for gang crime data collection.
- Establish a process for the reclassification of crimes that are determined to be gang-related after the initial report is filed.
- Draft written data collection policies (make a part of the task force policies and procedures manual).

Guideline 9: The Intelligence Process

- Carry out the steps in the intelligence process when handling gang-related information.
- Include analytical products in task force and gang unit daily operations.

Guideline 10: Case Management

- Design practices to ensure that financial and human resources are clearly directed in a manner consistent with supporting the mission.
- Address active deconfliction of cases so that activities between law enforcement entities are well communicated and coordinated.
- Ensure that all participants agree with and support the mission statement.
- Align decision-making protocols with the mission statement to avoid “mission drift.”

Guideline 11: Operational Planning

- Conduct operations in a manner that considers the safety of the general public, officers, and the offenders.
- Have a written operational plan for all tactical and proactive operations that involve contact with a suspect.
- Draft written operational planning policies (make a part of the policies and procedures manual).

Guideline 12: Critical Incident Response

- Anticipate and plan for violence and critical incidents during operations.
- Create a critical incident checklist to support an appropriate response when emotionally charged events occur.
- Draft a written critical incident response plan, and make the plan a part of the policies and procedures manual.

Guideline 13: Confidential Informants

- Establish policies and procedures to take full advantage of the informant asset, while protecting the integrity and well-being of the task force, the intelligence unit, the officers, and their parent agencies.
- Provide training to all personnel on informant policies.
- Establish an audit process to conduct regular, random reviews of informant contacts, informant records, payments made to informants, and all officer/informant interactions.
- Draft written confidential informant policies (make a part of the policies and procedures manual).

Guideline 14: Risk Management

- Develop policies to protect personnel from *physical risk* (personal safety) and *professional risk* (decisions that could compromise their career or integrity).
- Talk frequently and openly about risk with all personnel, and create an environment and culture that support sound and ethical decision making.
- Designate a risk manager to be responsible for safety considerations during each field operation.
- Draft written risk management policies (make a part of the task force policies and procedures manual).

Guideline 15: Training

- Establish a mandatory training program for all personnel that focuses on the task force policies and procedures manual.
- Collect written materials for all training curriculum, including lesson plans, course materials, and supplemental readings; update materials annually.
- Document all training completed by task force and gang unit personnel to ensure that all members complete their requisite training.
- Consider routine training of high-risk activity to fine-tune and adjust for safest practices.
- Consider outreach or informational training to patrol officers so that they understand the role of the task force.

Guideline 16: Funding

- Explore all available funding streams to ensure that operations can continue without interruption and personnel can operate with all of the support resources that they need to be successful.
- Consider local, state, federal, and private funding sources.
- Consider partnering with other governmental agencies to leverage existing funds that have been dedicated to gang responsibilities.

Guideline 17: Performance Measurement

- Establish a performance measurement system that ties outcomes to the mission.
- Consider adopting a performance measurement system similar to the federal Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART).

Guideline 1: Task Force Model

Determine the optimal model for a task force by identifying response needs

Community leaders, school administrators, law enforcement officials, and local citizens have each undoubtedly felt the impact of gang activity within their communities. Unsightly graffiti strewn on the sides of buildings, bullies harassing other kids in school, and groups of intimidating individuals hanging out on street corners and scaring patrons away from local businesses, not to mention the proliferation of violent and nonviolent crimes, are all the results of increasing gang activity in communities across the country. Effectively responding to the complex dynamics associated with the gang problem requires local law enforcement to employ a sophisticated, multidimensional approach, including the creation of a gang task force or gang intelligence unit.

Local law enforcement plays a pivotal role in developing an approach to addressing gang activity that meets the specific needs of the local community. However, many law enforcement agencies find that addressing a gang problem presents unique challenges when dealing with the political realities of the local community. Some elected officials may be reluctant to recognize that there is a gang problem within their jurisdiction because of fear it could create excessive community concerns. Likewise, the local business community may not want publicity directed at the "gang problem" for fear it could have an adverse impact on local business or tourism. Law enforcement officials, with their justice system partners,[5] must therefore find a way to demonstrate how a growing gang problem is affecting the community and then "sell" their approach to addressing the gang problem (e.g., creation of a gang task force) to local politicians, business leaders, and residents.

When developing a local gang task force model, law enforcement should begin by conducting an assessment of response needs and capabilities. This process starts with analysis of the local gang problem, including information from crime reports, intelligence reports, school administrators, community corrections caseload information, and community concerns. Patrol officers and correctional facilities may also provide valuable input.

Once the scope and scale of the problem are understood, law enforcement officials can move on to formulate an appropriate response model. Agencies with adequate resources may choose to respond by developing a gang task force or intelligence unit within their own agency. A single agency response may include resources from patrol, narcotics, violent crimes, and intelligence.

Analysis of the gang problem, however, may determine that a multiagency task force response is more desirable. Strategies involving multiple agencies and multiple jurisdictions may be complex and will require careful planning to ensure success. A comprehensive gang enforcement approach may include federal, state, and local participants from a variety of justice partners.

5 The justice system refers to law enforcement, corrections, probation and parole, prosecutors, and the juvenile justice system.

Whether intra-agency or multijurisdictional, a response model must include a strong analytical component, a partnership with prosecutorial authorities, and a plan for sustaining efforts over the long term.

After law enforcement officials and other justice system partners have selected the model they feel will be the most effective in addressing the local gang problem, they can take their gang problem analysis report and recommendations back to political, business, and community leaders. By educating stakeholder groups on how the gang problem affects them and how aggressive law enforcement and justice system efforts can improve the community for everyone, law enforcement officials will be more likely to gain the support they need to implement their gang task force model.

Advantages of a Multiagency/ Multijurisdictional[6] Gang Task Force

- **Resource multiplier**: Task force operations focus each participating agency's resources on an agreed-upon problem, employing an agreed-upon strategy.
- **Enhanced availability of funding streams**: State and federal funding may be available in many regions for a multijurisdictional task force.
- **Shared resources**: Task force operations often reduce duplication of efforts through shared resources, including equipment and personnel, and increase opportunities for safe deconfliction.
- **Shared intelligence**:[7] The multijurisdictional task force environment encourages communication and the sharing of intelligence information.
- **Intelligence-driven investigations**: Proactive task force investigations are driven by current multijurisdictional intelligence analysis.
- **Public relations**: Public perception of law enforcement may be improved through multijurisdictional law enforcement cooperation.
- **Shared task force housing**: A covert/off-site facility is often desirable and allows participants to focus on the gang-specific mission.

Example: Creation of the New Haven, Connecticut, Gang Task Force[8]

In the late '80s and early '90s, New Haven began to experience a serious increase in gang-related activity, especially violent behavior. In response to this activity and alarming trend, New Haven police initiated a partnership with state and local authorities. In 1992, the New Haven Gang Task Force was created. It brought together New Haven and state police; the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF); the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); the U.S. Marshals Service; the U.S. Attorney's Office; and the New Haven State's Attorney's Office to focus efforts on drug gangs and associated violence in the city of New Haven.

Utilizing federal tools, with the assistance and cooperation of state agencies, enabled the task force to dismantle major local drug gangs. Their efforts continue today to help eliminate the threat of violence and increase public safety to maintain peace and tranquility in neighborhoods.

6 "Multiagency" and "multijurisdictional" are used interchangeably throughout the document.

7 Additional information can be found in the *National Criminal Intelligence Sharing Plan*.

8 City of New Haven, Connecticut, Department of Police Service, www.cityofnewhaven.com/Police/Partnerships.asp#GangTask.

Guideline 2: Task Force Participants

Determine key agencies to participate in the task force

Visionary leadership is essential to the formation of the task force. Often, one law enforcement leader will be the catalyst that initiates the momentum to drive task force development. This "forward-thinking" leader is often the most important factor in rallying other law enforcement officials in support of the task force formation.

To maximize task force effectiveness, consideration should be given to inviting participants from all levels of the justice community who have a vested interest in the gang problem. Numerous federal, state, local, and tribal agencies have potential roles in the multidisciplinary approach to the gang problem. The goal is a collaborative environment in which each participating agency has an equal voice and recognizes each entity's role in task force success. Establishing a collaborative environment will enhance the ownership and commitment of each participating agency.

Problem analysis and development of the mission statement will help identify the key participants needed to successfully accomplish the task force objectives, as well as their respective roles and responsibilities.

Broad-based task force partners may include:

- Federal law enforcement
- State law enforcement
- Local law enforcement
- Tribal law enforcement
- Prosecution from each level
- Probation/parole at each level
- National Guard Counterdrug Program
- Regulatory agencies
- Youth Services Department, including juvenile justice agencies

Consideration should be given to agencies responsible for specific roles:

- Fiduciary responsibilities
- Legal responsibilities
- Communications support (multijurisdictional radio connectivity, etc.)
- IT support (computers, telephones, intranet, Internet, etc.)
- Technical support for operations (electronic intercepts, camera installations, etc.)
- Crime laboratory and evidence control support
- Analytical support to help direct resources in a manner that is consistent with the task force mission
- Grant responsibilities (if appropriate)

Prosecutorial agencies that should be involved include:

- U.S. Attorney's Office—enhanced sentencing guidelines/federal grand jury availability and including additional charges under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act, Continuing Criminal Enterprise (CCE), and the Hobbs Act.

Example: Monterey County, California, Joint Gang Task Force[9]

Members of the Monterey County Joint Gang Task Force include:

- Salinas Police Department
- Monterey County Sheriff's Office
- Monterey County Probation Office
- County District Attorney's Office
- California Highway Patrol

9 Monterey County Joint Gang Task Force home page, www.gangtaskforce.org.

- State prosecutor/Attorney General—use of state grand juries or the need for special legislation may be a consideration in seeking their involvement and the inclusion of other charges.
- Local prosecutors—consider a gang member "target prosecution program"; assign specific prosecutors to handle any cases involving gang members and prioritize gang prosecutions.

Others that should be considered for participation:

- State/federal parole officers can play a vital role in gang task force operations. They are a great source of information and have special powers that may enhance the effectiveness of the task force strategy.
- State Department of Corrections, county/city jails, and juvenile detention and corrections facilities can be a wealth of information. Many states allow the Department of Corrections to record telephone conversations, read various written correspondence, and track inmate visitor information, including biographical information and photos. These can be an excellent source of intelligence/criminal case information because gang members are often careless when utilizing these modes of communication. In many states, these conversations/letters can also be used as evidence. Be sure to check with the appropriate prosecutor(s) in your jurisdiction before collecting or utilizing this information. In addition, when a prisoner is booked in, most prisons/jails screen and classify every individual. Part of the process usually involves asking about the individual's gang affiliation and documenting gang tattoos.
- National Guard Counterdrug programs can provide air support or analytical support. In states with counterdrug programs, the National Guard can provide excellent support resources for a gang unit.

Gang task forces and intelligence units should consider ongoing collaboration with fusion centers. Many state and major urban area fusion centers employ the "all-crimes approach"[10] to information gathering,

10 The Baseline Capabilities document defines an "all-crimes approach" as an approach that incorporates terrorism and other high-risk threats into the existing crime-fighting framework, to ensure that possible precursor crimes are screened and analyzed for linkages to larger-scale terrorist or other crimes. This approach recognizes that there is a nexus between types of criminal activity (e.g., illegal drug operations, gangs, money laundering, fraud, identity theft, and terrorism). Using an all-crimes approach does not imply that a fusion center must address every crime that occurs within its area of responsibility. Rather, the routine risk assessment that a fusion center develops or supports development of should assist in prioritizing which crimes and/or hazards a state or region should

analysis, and dissemination. One component of the all-crimes approach is the potential inclusion of criminal information, such as narcotic and gang-related intelligence and information. Gang intelligence units and task forces are encouraged to explore the development of relationships with their state and/or urban area fusion centers to support the sharing of information and deconfliction.

Additionally, gang task forces and units should consider connectivity with the regional High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA). The purpose of HIDTAs is to enhance and coordinate drug control efforts among federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies. The program provides agencies with coordination, equipment, technology, and additional resources to combat drug trafficking and its harmful consequences in critical regions of the United States.[11] Though HIDTAs are focused on drug control efforts, collaborating with the regional HIDTA may provide gang units and task forces with valuable information about gang-related activities focused on narcotics.

Gang task forces should also consider other partnerships and/or resources. The National Gang Intelligence Center (NGIC) integrates the gang intelligence assets of federal, state, and local law enforcement entities to serve as a centralized intelligence resource for gang information and analytical support.[12] The National Gang Targeting, Enforcement & Coordination Center (Gang TECC) assists the initiation of gang-related investigations; aids with coordination, deconfliction, and effectiveness of gang-related initiatives, investigations, and prosecutions; and develops an enhanced understanding of the national gang problem and proposes strategies to neutralize the most violent and significant threats.[13] The National Youth Gang Center (NYGC) assists policymakers, practitioners, and researchers in their efforts to reduce youth gang involvement and crime by contributing information, resources, practical tools, and expertise towards the development and implementation of effective gang prevention, intervention, and suppression strategies.[14]

Efforts are currently under way to develop guidance on information sharing between corrections and law enforcement communities, including the types of information that can be shared between the two communities. Corrections agencies play an important role in gang-related intelligence and information collection and are integral players in successful task force and intelligence unit operations.

address and, in the development of a collection plan, identify what other sources of information may be useful for examining possible connections with other crimes.

11 Additional information on the HIDTA program is available at www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/hidta/index.html.

12 Additional information on the NGIC is available at www.usdoj.gov/criminal/ngic.

13 Additional information on Gang TECC is available at www.usdoj.gov/criminal/gangtecc.

14 Additional information on the NYGC is available at www.iir.com/nygc.

Guideline 3: Task Force Mission

Define the task force mission and create a written mission statement

The foundation of any successful task force is a clear mission—a written statement of what the task force aims to do, the overarching approach the task force will take, and the intended result of task force actions. The mission statement will focus task force participants on common goals and desired outcomes. The task force mission statement may address suppression, intervention, and/or education components and could include such items as enhancing public safety through the suppression of violent gang activities, sharing intelligence information with neighboring jurisdictions, or having the ability to solve violent crimes through a multijurisdictional response.

All task force participants must agree with and support the mission statement and underlying purpose of the task force in order to achieve optimal results. To gain consensus, key task force participants should be involved in mission statement development, and new participants in the task force should be educated on and agree to the mission statement as a condition of their participation. When all participants have a clear understanding of the agreed-upon short- and long-term goals, the task force will be more responsive to participant needs and less likely to deviate from its primary mission.

One of the greatest dangers to the sustainability of a task force or intelligence unit can be "mission drift," which occurs when external or internal forces cause an organization to depart from its core purpose (e.g., take on too many responsibilities and shift attention/resources away from fundamental activities). The mission statement helps the task force to stay focused on its primary purpose and serves as the foundation for both administrative and operational decisions of the task force.

Example: Mission of Dane County, Wisconsin, Narcotics and Gang Task Force[15]

1. Identify, arrest, and seek prosecution of drug offenders, including street-level users and sellers as well as those involved in major trafficking and conspiracies.
2. Identify, disrupt and, where appropriate, arrest individuals involved in illegal gang activity.
3. Identify, disrupt and, where appropriate, seek prosecution of individuals involved in prostitution and illegal gambling operations.
4. Develop and maintain an intelligence network for tracking drug and gang activities.
5. Disseminate information regarding drug and gang activities to appropriate law enforcement commanders and chiefs.
6. Provide drug and gang training to Dane County law enforcement personnel.
7. Support community-based anti-drug and anti-gang educational programs.
8. Solicit support of the residents of Dane County to aid in the suppression of drug and gang activities.
9. Identify and arrest fugitives/violent offenders on warrants and apprehension requests.

15 Madison Police Department, Dane County Narcotics and Gang Task Force Web site, www.ci.madison.wi.us/POLICE/taskforc.html.

Guideline 4: Task Force Design

Determine requisite organizational elements of the task force

A gang task force or intelligence unit can take many forms and adopt many different approaches to fighting the local gang problem. When making task force design decisions, task force leadership should first determine several basic requisite elements. For example, should the task force be uniformed, plainclothes, or a combination of both? Will the task force incorporate community needs and concerns as well as law enforcement goals? Will the task force include disciplines other than law enforcement (e.g., education, diversion, reentry from incarceration, or referral)?

The task force mission statement will help to answer some of these questions; however, further discussion among task force participants and other stakeholders may be needed to clarify the scope of expectations for the task force. It is important to obtain consensus in order to properly align expectations regarding short- and long-term outputs and outcomes and then make design decisions to create a task force that can meet those expectations. Available resources for the task force will also have a strong influence on scope and design decisions.

When making task force design decisions, task force leadership should also develop open dialogue and relationships with other disciplines dealing with the gang problem. This dialogue will help to identify overall redundancies or remaining gaps in tackling the gang problem. It will also help to identify ways in which the task force could support activities of other agencies, such as prevention, intervention, and education efforts.

Task Force Design Options

Below are brief descriptions of several task force design options for consideration:

Option #1: Make the task force investigative in nature and primarily responsible for investigation of criminal cases involving gangs; investigators are utilized to focus specifically on cases involving gang members.

- Proactive investigations: intelligence-driven investigations intended to disrupt ongoing criminal activity and dismantle gang criminal enterprises. Many of these cases target drug and gun trafficking activities, which are often the "economic engines" supporting gang organizations. Intelligence-driven investigations are dependent upon the collection and analysis of intelligence information from a variety of sources, including the community. There must be agreement regarding long-term versus short-term investigations by task force participants;

Example:
Metro Denver, Colorado, Gang Task Force[16]

The Metro Gang Task Force (MGTF) in Denver, Colorado, has utilized a successful single proactive strategy gang task force since 1993. The mission of the participating 13 federal, state, and local agencies is to proactively investigate and dismantle violent gangs.

MGTF has a board of directors that helps select and prioritize the most violent gang groups utilizing multiple investigative strategies. This task force has received broad recognition for successful execution of its mission.

16 Metro Gang Task Force Policy and Procedure Manual, Denver, Colorado.

the mission statement of the task force should address this issue.

- Reactive investigations: follow-up investigation of criminal cases that have a gang relationship. These cases are often referred to task force investigators by the participating agencies.
- Many times it is difficult for task force investigators to perform both proactive and reactive investigations. The urgency associated with reactive investigations will deplete the ability to focus on proactive investigations. High-profile and time-consuming investigations, such as homicides, can paralyze a task force with limited resources.

Option #2: Make the task force primarily an intelligence-gathering group that gathers and shares intelligence with investigators and detectives.

- The task force acts as a gang intelligence support service for other criminal investigators. The importance of gathering, analyzing, and sharing intelligence with other law enforcement components cannot be overemphasized.
- Other responsibilities should be strictly controlled, as they will dilute the ability of the task force to focus upon its intelligence mission.
- Intelligence gathering will require an intelligence recording system, compliance with 28 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 23 guidelines, and compliance with the guidelines in the *National Criminal Intelligence Sharing Plan*.

Option #3: Make the task force a uniformed gang-suppression response team.

- This option is often utilized in a single-agency response but may be a valuable component in a multiagency task force operation.
- The response team should have an intelligence component linked to it.
- Intelligence and community input should drive the team's responses, and information gathered by the team should be monitored and cataloged by the intelligence component.

If resources are sufficient, it is desirable to incorporate elements from each of these options into a comprehensive gang task force. Combining intelligence-gathering/analysis, uniform suppression, and focused investigative resources can be a very productive strategy. Each component of a combined task force approach must have a clear and defined role in the task force mission.

Example: Overview of the Las Vegas, Nevada, Safe Streets Gang Task Force (LVSSGTF)[17]

The mission of the LVSSGTF is to identify and target for prosecution and dismantlement violent street gangs operating in the Las Vegas Valley. The LVSSGTF enhances the effectiveness of federal/state/local law enforcement resources through a well-coordinated initiative seeking the most effective investigative/prosecutive avenues by which to convict and incarcerate dangerous offenders.

All participants acknowledge that the LVSSGTF is a joint operation in which all agencies act as partners in the operation of the task force. An executive board made up of the heads of the participating entities is responsible for the policy and direction of the LVSSGTF. The executive board meets semiannually in order to collectively provide policy oversight. Membership on the executive board can be delegated by the law enforcement agency head to a subordinate.

All LVSSGTF investigations are initiated in accordance with U.S. Attorney General's Guidelines on General Crimes, Racketeering Enterprise and Domestic Security/Terrorism Investigations (AG Guidelines). The investigative methods employed are consistent with the policies and procedures of the FBI and the AG Guidelines. However, in situations where the statutory or common law of Nevada is more restrictive than comparable federal law, the investigative methods employed by state and local law enforcement agencies conform to the requirements of such statutory or common law pending a decision as to venue for prosecution.

The criteria for determining whether to prosecute a particular violation in state or federal court focuses upon achieving the greatest overall benefit to law enforcement and the public. Any question that arises pertaining to prosecutive jurisdiction is resolved through discussion among all investigative agencies and prosecutive entities having an interest in the matter.

17 FBI Las Vegas Field Office, Las Vegas Safe Streets Gang Task Force (LVSSGTF), www.lasvegas.fbi.gov/taskforce.htm.

Guideline 5: Memorandum of Understanding

Draft a memorandum of understanding for task force operations

The task force memorandum of understanding (MOU) defines the terms, responsibilities, relationships, strategies, and commitments of the entity that has agreed to participate in the gang task force. The MOU should provide an outline for the "who, what, where, when, why, and how" of the task force operation. All participating entities should agree to commit to the task force policies by signing the MOU.

An effective MOU should:

- Include a clear mission statement that will guide investigations and enforcement activities throughout the life of the task force.
- Establish and commit participants to the task force command structure.
- Establish a project control group/board of directors.
- Provide for one representative per agency.
- Provide for an equal vote for each member agency.
- Strive for unanimous decision making.
- Mandate that the control board meet regularly.
- Provide specific and attainable goals.
- Designate a lead agency.
- Identify the source(s) of funding.
- Identify primary participants.
- Fix participant responsibilities and their commitment.
- Provide for the sharing and use of seized assets.
- Establish a regular review process (audits/records reviews).
- Establish information privacy policies.
- Address agency liability issues.
- Bind participant agencies to agreed-upon policies and procedures.

It is important to name the task force's fiscal agent to handle all monetary issues, such as grants, facilities, and forfeiture items. In most cases, task force participants will name one of the participating agencies to act as the fiscal agent for the project.

Guideline 6: Policies and Procedures

Develop a comprehensive task force policies and procedures manual

Every task force should have a comprehensive, written policies and procedures manual that clearly defines the administrative and operational framework required to execute the gang task force mission. The policies and procedures manual is the foundation for communicating operational expectations within the task force, ensuring performance consistency and accountability, reducing liability, and creating a professional environment. The task force MOU should bind all participants to comply with all policies and procedures outlined in the manual.

To ensure that policies and procedures are current and relevant to task force operations, the policies and procedures manual should be reviewed in its entirety, modified as appropriate, and ratified by the task force governing board on an annual basis. Updated versions of the policies and procedures manual should be widely disseminated within the task force, and the most current version of the manual should serve as the foundation of the task force personnel training program.

It is important that task force personnel have input in the process of policy development in order to ensure that the full range of administrative and operational issues is properly addressed and to achieve the highest possible level of buy-in from those who will be governed by the policies.

Considerations

A few items to consider when developing the policies and procedures manual:

- Law enforcement policies and procedures are generally public record.
- Task force policies and procedures are “discoverable” in most circumstances.
- The absence of relevant policies and procedures can create substantial exposure for the task force and participating agencies.
- Failing to follow established policies and procedures can create substantial exposure for the task force and participating agencies.
- A comprehensive task force policies and procedures manual can be lengthy and complex. Existing policies and procedures from other task force operations and law enforcement agencies may serve as guidelines in developing this critical document.

Elements to Include

Critical elements to include in a comprehensive task force policies and procedures manual:

- **Personnel roles and responsibilities** (see Guideline 7—Personnel).
- Gang terminology definitions and **data collection policies** (see Guideline 8—Data Collection).
- Specific and comprehensive **case management policies** (see Guideline 10—Case Management).
- **Operational planning policies**, including plan requirements and approval process (see Guideline 11—Operational Planning).

- Comprehensive **critical incident response plan** and **critical incident checklist** (see Guideline 12—Critical Incident Response).
- Specific and comprehensive **confidential informant policies** (see Guideline 13—Confidential Informants).
- Specific and comprehensive **risk management policies** (see Guideline 14—Risk Management).
- Administrative procedures.
- Financial procedures, including payroll, purchasing, and specific policies regarding the handling and bookkeeping of all monies associated with a task force/unit operation.
- Internal and citizen complaint procedures.
- Sexual harassment and hostile work environment complaint procedures.
- Use of force policy.
- Firearms.
- Shooting incidents.
- Injury procedures.
- Major incident notification procedures.
- Media relations and release of information.
- Operation and use of unit motor vehicles.
- Motor vehicle accident procedures.
- Operational briefings and debriefings.
- High-risk activities, including search warrants, arrests, and undercover operations.
- Clandestine laboratory investigations.
- Use and maintenance of task force equipment.
- Alcohol consumption/substance abuse in the performance of lawful duties.
- “Wrong door” procedures.
- Undercover/covert operations (including preapproval requirements and a policy that describes each role and responsibility associated with this high-risk endeavor).
- Undercover/covert equipment procedures.
- Evidence-handling procedures.
- Initiation of investigation documentation (including preapproval requirements so there is continuity between the mission statement and the investigations initiated at the task force).
- Asset forfeiture procedures.
- Information privacy.
- Facility security.

Guideline 7: Personnel

Develop guidelines for selecting and managing task force personnel

The success of the task force will be a direct result of the quality of its personnel. The nature of a multijurisdictional task force environment requires selecting personnel who are mature, responsible, positive, and committed to achieving the task force's mission. The multicultural and multiethnic composition of the community may have an impact on some personnel selections.

It is recommended that the MOU address a process for selection of task force personnel. Simply asking an agency to "send someone" is rarely the best approach. A careful and thoughtful selection of the most appropriate personnel will be a critical factor in the task force's success or failure.

The task force should also establish written personnel roles and responsibilities that outline the job descriptions for each position within the task force, including scope of power, superiors and subordinates, administrative and operational tasks, and performance standards. The personnel roles and responsibilities document should be included in the task force policies and procedures manual.

Task Force Leadership (Commander/ Director)

The importance of leadership should be emphasized in the formation, development, and sustainability of the task force. Leadership is the "lifeblood" of any productive organization. The best task force leaders are "forward thinkers" who anticipate the issues, understand the politics, and are able to negotiate the problems that will inevitably emerge when developing and managing a task force. A "can-do" attitude coupled with diplomacy and tenacity is critical to success.

Task force leaders should exhibit:

- Communication skills at all levels (participating agencies, other law enforcement entities, community, and media).
- Ability to operate in a multijurisdictional environment.
- Commitment to the concept that everyone in the task force is "equal."
- Demonstrated ability to work in a politically sensitive environment.
- Strong interpersonal skills.
- Strong diplomatic and negotiation skills, and a commitment to positive resolution of conflicts.
- An appreciation for and understanding of the roles and challenges of task force representatives and their respective agencies.

- Commitment to the collaborative team effort, excellence, and success.

Task Force Supervision (Supervisors/ Managers)

Supervisors in a task force environment will be called upon to oversee the activities of multiple agency representatives. Supervisors set the tone and culture for task force personnel whom they supervise, consistent with the policies, procedures, and expectations of the participating agencies.

Task force supervisors must:

- Be proactive in maintaining a positive and professional work environment in the task force.
- Be attentive to the "methods and means" task force members employ in conducting their investigative activities.
- Constantly exhibit and enforce integrity and quality as "standards" in task force operations.

Task Force Deputies/Officers/Agents

Agency representatives selected to work in the gang task force should be mature individuals who consistently exercise sound judgment. Personnel should have a desire to work in the task force. The task force should not be a dumping ground for personnel problems.

It is desirable to establish a selection process to evaluate potential task force candidates. Participating agencies are encouraged to consider an oral interview process that includes task force supervisors and managers, so they may have input into personnel selection.

Task force deputies, officers, and agents should demonstrate:

- Consistent commitment to integrity.
- Self-motivation.
- Excellent record of prior performance (internal affairs/disciplinary issues).
- Ability to work with minimal supervision.
- Team commitment and strong interpersonal skills.
- Ability to communicate effectively with all segments of the community.
- Positive attitude.
- Accurate and comprehensive report writing.
- Attention to details.
- Commitment to quality work products.

Task Force Support Staff

The task force mission often determines the need for and composition of the support staff. Task force support staff should include:

- Adequate analytical support to help direct task force operations.
- Technical support of investigations to enhance officer safety as well as investigative effectiveness.
- Specialized support, such as linguists and transcribers, to aid in case development and officer safety.

Additional Personnel Considerations

Many agencies embrace the practice of rotation of task force personnel. There are advantages and disadvantages to this practice that impact task force management and operations.

Advantages of Rotation:

- May provide additional growth opportunities for participating personnel.
- May provide new faces for undercover operations.
- Shares expertise within the participating organizations.
- May bring new perspectives into the task force.

Disadvantages of Rotation:

- Substantially disrupts task force ability to conduct long-term or complex investigations.
- Disrupts continuity of the task force team.
- Reduces expertise that builds with experience.
- Inexperienced team members may create officer safety issues.
- Increases training demands on the task force.

The task force may consider rotating the leadership role among agencies participating in the task force. If so, the MOU should clearly identify the agencies that will participate in the leadership position, the length of time in the position, and the order in which each participating agency will maintain leadership responsibilities.

Guideline 8: Data Collection

Establish gang crime data criteria and develop a data collection system

Many communities do not collect gang crime data, since they have no standardized definitions for "gang," "gang member," or "gang crimes." Definitions that do exist vary widely among agencies and jurisdictions across the country.[18] All participating task force agencies must agree upon the definitions and criteria for these terms to establish a baseline for gang problem analysis. Consider adopting statutory definitions or the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Violent Gang and Terrorist Organization File (VGTOF) definitions to standardize the criteria.

Example: Definition of a Gang[19]

An ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons who have a common interest and/or activity characterized by the commission of or involvement in a pattern of criminal or delinquent conduct.

The definitions and criteria adopted for gang membership must be reasonable and justifiable to the community. Again, there is inconsistency across the nation regarding gang membership criteria. A number of states, as well as the VGTOF, provide considerations for developing gang member definitions and criteria. It is critical, however, that the participants of the task force agree upon common definitions and criteria that meet the minimal threshold standard of "reasonable suspicion."

When considering what criteria to use for including a gang member in an intelligence database, some agencies/task forces require that two or more gang "indicators" be present. One of the indicators often discussed is self-admission. There are differing opinions about whether self-admission should stand alone as reasonable suspicion for inclusion of a person in a gang intelligence database. Some states accept self-admission as reasonable suspicion and include a self-admitted gang member in their database, whereas other states require that an *additional* indicator be present before listing the individual as a gang member in their intelligence database. The task force should be cognizant of the indicators applicable to the jurisdiction.

The Global Justice Information Sharing Initiative's Gang Intelligence Strategy Committee (GISC) has recommended that self-admission be accepted as a stand-alone qualifier for inclusion in the VGTOF database.

After a common task force definition and criteria for gang are adopted, an intelligence database that identifies gang members and gang associates should be established. Utilizing the *National Criminal Intelligence Sharing Plan*, law enforcement agencies can find guidance with regards to establishing an intelligence system that will be in compliance with federal guidelines under 28 CFR Part 23. Written policies and procedures should be developed that address the review, audit, and purge requirements of these systems to demonstrate compliance with 28 CFR Part 23.

18 Current federal and state definitions of "gang," "gang member," and "gang crime" are available at www.nationalgangcenter.gov/documents/definitions.pdf.

19 Federal Bureau of Investigation, Violent Gang and Terrorist Organization File (VGTOF).

This process and development of a gang member database may have already taken place at the state level. Law enforcement agencies should research and evaluate existing database resources before initiating a new system. Contributing to existing intelligence systems promotes consistency and reduces duplication.

One of the keys to the success of a gang unit and/or task force is the sharing of information among its participants. From an investigative standpoint, participants may hold important pieces of information that may help with ongoing investigations. Not sharing this information may lead to an incomplete case or officer safety issues. A gang unit and/or task force intelligence system aids in information sharing and should be utilized by all members of the unit and task force.

There currently is no single national gang intelligence database. The GISC has recommended the promulgation and adoption of national data standards to allow seamless sharing of gang intelligence information. Agencies should select gang intelligence systems that meet the particular needs of their jurisdiction and are compatible with local systems. The Bureau of Justice Assistance, through the Regional Information Sharing Systems® (RISS) Program, offers free access to the RISSGang™ Program, which includes a gang intelligence database, to vetted law enforcement agencies.

Gang Crime Data Collection

In addition to standard definitions, the task force must also establish uniform standards for gang data collection. The use of varied collection methods makes analysis of the gang problem very difficult and the validity of the data suspect. Without valid data, it is hard to direct task force operations and resources toward the most violent offenders or emerging gang problems. Further, the lack of historic gang crime data may make it difficult to measure task force effectiveness and success.

When evaluating a process for collecting gang crime data, decisions must be made regarding what data is collected. Some areas for consideration may include:

- **"Gang-related" crime**—This collection strategy reports most offenses committed by gang members as gang-related crime. Gang-behavior analysis indicates that gang members routinely engage in criminal conduct. This provides for a consistent and complete report of gang-involved crime and minimizes subjective decisionmaking. As in all aspects of the street gang problem, however, there are no absolutes. Therefore, common sense should be the rule. A screening and review process will enhance the quality of the data collection.

- **"Gang-motivated" crime**—Many law enforcement officials have concluded that collecting data regarding only gang-motivated crime produces little real or useful information. In this collection strategy, information is counted only when a crime is clearly **motivated** by the gang affiliation of the offender. Suspect, victim, or witness statements may be utilized to evaluate the motive of the violator. Experience has shown, however, that it is very difficult for an officer/deputy to determine that a crime was truly "motivated" by the perpetrator's gang affiliation.

Data Reclassification

It should be noted that the true gang connection to any criminal offense or offender might become known only after the initial report is filed. A process of reclassifying a gang crime, when appropriate, is necessary to collecting accurate data.

Once gang terminology definitions, gang crime data collection methods, and a gang-related crime reclassification process have been agreed upon, written data collection policies should be created and included in the task force policies and procedures manual. Participating agencies should include collection technologies and gang collection criteria in the MOU.

Guideline 9: The Intelligence Process

Incorporate the intelligence process into gang intelligence activities

The intelligence process—which includes collection, analysis, storage, and dissemination of intelligence—is a key part of a gang intelligence unit and task force. Intelligence can guide investigations, and it is imperative that units have policies and procedures in place that govern the intelligence process as well as the purging of data.

The intelligence process takes different pieces of information and turns them into actionable intelligence. Information is raw, unanalyzed data that is collected from multiple sources, including field incident reports and Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs), police records, open source records, the Internet, citizen calls, informants, undercover operations, and the media. Information identifies persons, evidence, locations, events, or processes that indicate the incidence of criminal or terrorist activity or the presence of potential vulnerabilities for criminal activity, a terrorist attack, or other major hazard (e.g., natural disaster or industrial accident). Open source data is important in gang unit operations; this type of data may come from the Internet, such as YouTube videos or MySpace and Facebook pages. Gangs may use social networking sites to recruit members; therefore, information obtained from open source Internet sites may be beneficial in gang unit operations.

Intelligence is the product of the analysis of raw information related to crimes, crime patterns, terrorist activities, and major hazards. Intelligence can be generated through internal analysis or accessed from other agencies (federal, state, or local) or interagency organizations that have an analytical function, including joint task forces, fusion centers, or other national intelligence sharing mechanisms. The *National Criminal Intelligence Sharing Plan* (NCISP)[20] recognizes the importance of criminal intelligence in successful intelligence unit operations. As stated in the NCISP, criminal intelligence "results from a process involving planning and direction, information collection, processing/collation, analysis, dissemination, and reevaluation (feedback) of information on suspected criminals and/or organizations."[21] This process is also known as the intelligence process.

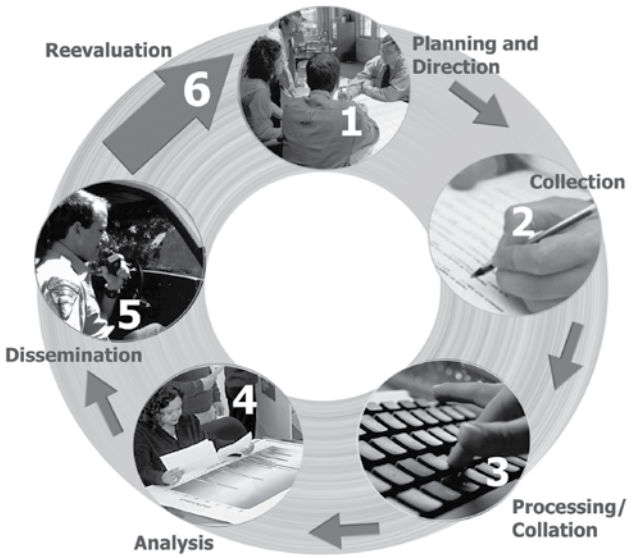
20 Available at www.it.ojp.gov.

The Intelligence Process[22]

The six steps of the intelligence process provide intelligence units and task forces with the foundation for turning separate, seemingly unrelated pieces of information into intelligence that may in turn lead to an active criminal investigation.

As part of the intelligence process, task force and intelligence unit leadership should identify their collection requirements, or what types of information

The Intelligence Process



21 NCISP, p. 3.

22 For additional information on the NCISP and the intelligence process, please see p. 3 of the NCISP and Guideline 1 of Global's *Fusion Center Guidelines*, both available at www.it.ojp.gov.

task force members should strive to gather, to ensure information collected is focused and related to gang activity. Collection refers to the gathering of the raw data needed to produce intelligence products. Data may be collected from many sources, including but not limited to public records, the Internet, confidential sources, incident reports, and the general public. The collection step can provide intelligence units and task force members with valuable pieces of information that, when combined, show ongoing gang-related activity.

The next step of the process—processing and collation—involves evaluating the validity and reliability of the information. Collation entails sorting, combining, categorizing, and arranging the data collected so that relationships can be determined. Analysis is the portion of the intelligence process that transforms the raw data into products that are useful. This is also the function that separates "information" from "intelligence." This crucial step makes the collection effort beneficial. Without this portion of the process, task forces are left with disjointed pieces of information to which no meaning has been attached.

The goal of the intelligence process is to develop a report in which separate pieces of information have been analyzed and connected in a logical and valid manner to produce an intelligence report containing valid judgments based on information analyzed. Dissemination is an important step in the process. Without disseminating the intelligence developed, it is pointless to collect it. The intelligence disseminated must be timely and credible to be useful. Dissemination must also be evaluated based on a "right to know" and the "need to know." Right to know means that the recipient has the legal authority to obtain the information pursuant to court order, statute, decisional law, or policy. Need to know means the requestor has the need to obtain information to execute official responsibilities. The final step of the intelligence process involves obtaining feedback on the process performed and the products produced by the intelligence function. This step allows evaluation of the performance or effectiveness of an intelligence function. The proper completion of these steps ensures that the data used are managed appropriately and within the legal constraints regarding the privacy and rights of all citizens; however, the steps are often interconnected and, frequently, the boundaries blur. Each step of the process needs to be understood to produce accurate, timely intelligence reports.

Key to the intelligence process is that the cycle should not stop. Once an intelligence product has been disseminated, the product and information should be reevaluated and a determination made whether additional collection, collation, analysis, and dissemination are needed.

Implementation of the intelligence process will better equip gang intelligence units and task forces to take seemingly unrelated pieces of information and produce valuable pieces of intelligence related to gang activity.

Analytical Products

As part of the intelligence process, the analysis step is crucial in transforming seemingly separate pieces of information into intelligence. The International Association of Law Enforcement Intelligence Analysts (IALEIA) produced the *Law Enforcement Analytic Standards*[23] booklet, which provides standards for analysis that correspond to the intelligence process. The *Fusion Center Guidelines* report also identifies various services and products relating to the analysis step of this process that can be applied to gang

23 Available on the IALEIA Web site at www.ialeia.org or DOJ's Global Web site at www.it.ojp.gov.

intelligence units and task forces. These services include deconfliction; intelligence reports and briefings; association, link, and network analysis; flowcharting; and telephone toll analysis.

Intelligence-Led Policing (ILP)

An important component of intelligence-led policing is the integration of intelligence into the decision-making processes of an agency or task force. ILP plays an important role in targeting the most violent and problematic gangs as well as developing an effective investigative strategy, developing case budgets, and formulating goals of gang-related cases. The governing body of the task force should receive regular intelligence updates with both strategic and tactical intelligence products regarding the gangs in the jurisdiction, as well as gang-related activity. These should be included as regular agenda items for the governing body. The logical allocation of resources can only be made based upon valid and timely intelligence concerning the gang problems in the jurisdiction.

The intelligence products produced by the task force or intelligence unit also become important in advising the participating agencies of the problems being addressed by the task force, as well as informing the public of the reasons for the task force and the targets of the investigative activity. Since most task forces are at least partially funded by some type of grant or contributory funding by the participating agencies, strategic intelligence reporting can become very important in justifying the continuation of funding for task force efforts. Intelligence also provides a baseline for performance measures for task forces.

28 CFR Part 23

As mentioned in Guideline 8, as part of the intelligence process, gang task forces and intelligence units may establish an intelligence database to collect, store, and analyze information and intelligence. Agencies should ensure that the database is in compliance with 28 CFR Part 23 and that there are written policies and procedures developed for the database that address the review, audit, and purge requirements identified in 28 CFR Part 23.[24]

24 Additional information on 28 CFR Part 23 can be found at www.iir.com/28cfr.

Guideline 10: Case Management

Establish a process for selecting and managing cases for the task force

Proper selection, development, and management of cases are fundamental requirements for task force success. Case management policies should be formalized in writing and included in the task force policies and procedures manual.

Case management practices should be designed to ensure that the task force's financial and human resources are clearly directed in a manner consistent with the mission of the task force. The success of the task force will be determined by its ability to meet its performance goals (see Guideline 17—Performance Measurement) and local community expectations. Formalized case management policies will help to ensure that case selection and management decisions are made with mission-based outcomes and expectations in mind.

Case management should also address active deconfliction of cases so that activities between law enforcement entities are well communicated and coordinated. This is critical for both the safety of law enforcement personnel and professional management of their efforts. The deconfliction process should be mandated and detailed in the case management policies.

Case management policies should address:

- Formalized case initiation and approval process
  - Target assessment should be driven by the task force mission.
  - Target assessment may be impacted by resource availability.
- Human Resources considerations
- Budget considerations
- Prosecution strategy and support
- Community well-being and public safety considerations
- Deconfliction of cases
- Review process to ensure that the mission and outcome goals of the task force are being met

Task forces may elect to develop their own case management system to address the specific needs of the task force or may elect to utilize one of the participating agencies' case management systems. In either event, a decision should be made as to how the long-range archiving of reports will be handled past the life of the task force. A decision should be made as to whether or not all participating agencies will receive copies of all investigative reports generated by the task force.

Guideline 11: Operational Planning

Develop operational plans for every operation involving suspect contact

Gang task force and intelligence unit operations occur in an ever-evolving environment. The task force is obligated to conduct operations in a manner that considers the safety of the general public, the officers, and the offenders. Although all task force operations involve risk, forethought and preplanning may reduce some known and anticipated risks and may control the environment to the extent possible.

The importance of proper operational planning cannot be overstated. Every tactical and proactive operation in which there may be contact with a suspect should have a written operational plan and a dedicated on-scene "risk manager" (see Guideline 14—Risk Management).

Detailed and comprehensive operational plans should include information from all available intelligence sources. Input should be solicited from the case agent/officer, undercover officer (if applicable), supervisor, and other team members. Critical information and input may also be obtained from the field officers and/or supervisors of the target area. Intelligence gleaned from the community may be relevant to the operation and should be considered.

Operational planning policies should be formalized in writing and included in the task force policies and procedures manual.

Development of operational plans should adhere to the following principles:

- All operational plans should be written in detail.
- All operational plans should be approved by the supervisor/commander.
- Operational plans should include:
  - Statement of operational objectives.
  - Case synopsis.
  - Plan of action.
- Entry plan and assignments (if applicable).
- Suspect information (including photographs, if available).
- Location and time of event.
- Specific assignments for all participating personnel.
- Dedicated on-scene "risk manager."
- Photographs, diagrams, and maps of target area.
- Communications plan.
- Body wire communications and other methods of communicating with undercover agents.
- Contingency plans.
  - Emergency and abort signals.
  - Rescue plan.
  - Evacuation plan.
  - Termination of operation plan.
  - Pursuit plan/policy.
  - Location of trauma center/ER facilities.
- Dedicated staging, rally, and debriefing areas.
- Deconfliction center notification.
- Notification of on-duty local law enforcement officers.
- Equipment checklist.

Additional Planning Considerations

Area Considerations: On proactive cases, the task force can often select the location of the operation. In these cases, special consideration should be given to community safety and other potential/known risks.

- Can the location be controlled and/or observed by surveillance units?
- Does the location minimize the potential for police pursuit?
- What is the known backdrop in the event of gunfire?
- Are there known hazards in the immediate area (schools, day care centers, malls, or other highly populated locations)?
- Is the area secure?
- Will the area populace be a consideration?

Suspect Considerations

- What is the criminal history or violent gang affiliation of the suspect(s)?
- What is the anticipated number of suspects involved?
- What is their weapons history or access to weapons?
- Have all databases been queried (RISS, HIDTA, gang files, Intelligence, INTERPOL, and others)?
- Are there language considerations?
- Is there information regarding emotional or mental conditions?

Resource Considerations

- Are there sufficient personnel for the situation? (The situation may continue to evolve, and this is an ongoing decision for the risk manager.)
- Is adequate technical equipment available?
- Is the task force tactical expertise sufficient for the operation? If not, are additional resources available?
- Is air support necessary and is it available?
- Is a trauma care facility or adequate medical support readily available?
- Are the communications capabilities adequate?

Operations Briefing and Debriefing Considerations

- All field operations should include a formal briefing event.
- All members that will participate in the operation must be present for the briefing.
- All operations should be debriefed and critiqued by the participants as soon as practical after the event. The object of debriefing the event is to seek opportunities to improve task force operations (safety and efficiency considerations).

Guideline 12: Critical Incident Response

Prepare the task force for responding to critical incidents

By their very nature, gang task force operations take place in volatile environments. Though professional leadership and careful planning may minimize risk, violence and critical incidents are still realities that need to be anticipated and planned for.

Policymakers, managers, and supervisors must develop a formal critical incident response plan and provide all task force personnel with training on the components of the plan and its importance. In addition to the plan, a critical incident checklist should be created to support an appropriate response when emotionally charged events occur. The actions personnel take or fail to take immediately following an incident will have a tremendous impact on the liability and integrity of the parent agencies, the task force, and the lives of the involved personnel.

Critical incidents may include:

- Intentional or accidental shootings.
- Serious assault or injury to a team member.
- Exposure to a traumatic event (e.g., officer-involved shooting).
- Serious injury to or fatality of an in-custody suspect.

- Barricade or hostage incident.
- Vehicle collisions resulting in death or serious injury.

The task force critical incident response plan should include:

- Emergency contact information for all task force personnel (this information must be updated frequently).
- Emergency contact information for all participating agencies (task force management should have this available at all times).
- Crime-scene management protocols to protect and preserve all evidence and witnesses.
- Transportation and security of involved personnel.
- The availability of legal representation for all involved personnel (per the MOU).
- Control of media access and release of information.
- Support and assistance to the families of involved personnel (per the MOU).

Guideline 13: Confidential Informants

Develop policies for managing and controlling confidential informants

The area of task force operations that requires the highest degree of command and control from the task force commander is the management of confidential informants. Informants are a necessary investigative "tool" in law enforcement. History clearly demonstrates, however, that informants pose a significant risk to the task force, to officers, and to themselves if they are not properly managed and controlled.

Successfully courting and managing informants are critical to the success of task force operations. Therefore, comprehensive, written confidential informant policies should be a part of the task force policies and procedures manual. These policies should be designed to take full advantage of the critical investigative asset, while protecting the integrity and well-being of the task force, the officers, their parent agencies, and the informant.

Items that should be addressed by the confidential informant policies include:

- Types of informants that are permitted and who needs to approve their use.[25]
- Rules regarding relationships.
- Opposite-gender considerations.
- Fraternization and business relationships.
- Supervisory review responsibilities.
- Supervisor/commander approval required.

- Payments of informants.
  - Supervisory preapproval required before payment is made.
  - Signed receipt by informant required for all payments.
  - Two-officer rule when meeting with or paying informants.
- Confidential informant (CI) agreement and liability waiver.
- Confidentiality rules for informant files.
- Guidelines regarding release of informant information.
- Documentation requirements for all informant activities.
- Guidelines regarding the use of confidential informants versus cooperating witnesses (if applicable).
- Background investigations to include fingerprint-based records checks.

All personnel should receive detailed training on the confidential informant policies. Additionally, an audit process should be in place that requires task force supervisors to conduct regular, random reviews of

25 For informants on pretrial, probation, or parole supervision, the supervising pretrial, probation, or parole officer should be informed of the potential use of the informant and may need to obtain the approval of the agency director before someone can be used as an informant. Agencies that are utilizing informants on pretrial, probation, or parole supervision may also require approval from the court system. Personnel are strongly encouraged to consult with their agency's legal advisor to ensure compliance with all laws.

informant contacts, informant records, payments made to informants, and all officer/informant interactions.

Task Force Commander Responsibilities

- Establish written confidential informant policies for the approval, use, and payment of confidential informants (to be included in the task force policies and procedures manual).
- Establish sound accounting practices for confidential informant funds.
- Create a task force environment that reinforces policies, agency standards, and integrity regarding the use of informants.
- Establish a system of safeguards to monitor the informant program (audits, interviews, periodic evaluations) and document these activities.
- Provide final approval on all major decisions regarding confidential informants.
- Provide final approval regarding the use of high-risk informants (violent offender, sex offender, role in gang activities, use of juveniles).
- Train task force supervisors regarding their roles and responsibilities in the confidential informant program.

Task Force Supervisory Responsibilities

- **Know what is going on with task force informants.**
- Approve and supervise use of informants and confidential funds.
- Train task force agents regarding their roles and responsibilities in the confidential informant program.
- Enforce policy, procedures, and standards.
- Conduct random audits, reviews, and interviews regarding informant use/activity and document these activities.
- Look for and respond to “danger signals” regarding agent/CI relationships.
- Continually evaluate informant activities regarding CI effectiveness, value, and risk to the task force or the informant.

Task Force Agent/Officer Responsibilities

- Know and comply with confidential informant policies.
- Keep the task force supervisor informed at all times.
- Conduct and document detailed debriefings of informant.
- Verify and document informant identity.
- **CORROBORATE ALL INFORMANT INFORMATION** through independent investigative strategies (surveillance, outside intelligence information, records verifications).
- Control the informant and investigation.
- Document all informant contacts and activities.
- Document all informant expenditures and payments to the informant.
- Maintain a professional relationship at all times.
- Do not unnecessarily expose other task force agents, vehicles, methods, and technology to informants.

Special “high-risk informant” considerations: All task force personnel must recognize that certain informants pose an extreme risk to the safety, reputation, and integrity of the members, the parent agencies, and the investigation. Special precautions must be employed when utilizing these high-risk assets. Additionally, these precautions should be addressed in the task force and/or gang unit policy on informants.

Guideline 14: Risk Management

Develop policies to mitigate physical and professional risks

Task force officers face two types of risk: *physical risk* (personal safety) and *professional risk* (decisions made that compromise their career path and integrity).

To provide a strong layer of institutional protection from both types of risk, the task force must have written risk management policies as an element of its policies and procedures manual. The risk management policies should be designed to protect the task force, the participating agencies, and the officers from unnecessary liability, helping to ensure that all task force personnel return home safely, with their careers intact.

In addition to creating written policies, task force managers and supervisors also have an obligation to actively manage their personnel to minimize risk exposure. Managers and supervisors should talk frequently and openly about risk with all personnel and create an environment and culture that support sound and ethical decision making.

The task force must embrace the philosophy, **"We have one rule…we follow all of the rules, all of the time."** Task force managers and supervisors must set the tone and be role models at all times. If task force members see deviations by their leaders, it compromises all of the rules. Task force managers and supervisors also have an obligation to the members, parent agencies, and the law enforcement profession to take swift and decisive action when violations occur.

If the rules do not reflect the current operational practices, management must be open to reviewing and, if appropriate, revising task force policies and procedures to ensure that practice is consistent with written policies. In addition, standard operating procedures should always be current and consistent with contemporary "best practices" of the profession. Utilizing the lessons learned from other agencies across the country could enable the task force to further reduce potential risks, without having to learn a safety lesson the hard way.

Professional Risk Considerations

Task force *professional* risk management policies should be in place to guide decision making in known high-risk situations, such as:

- Informant use and relationships (see Guideline 13—Confidential Informants).
- Evidence-handling policies and procedures.
- Money handling.
- Undercover decision making.
- Use of force.
- Overtime and time-management documentation and practices.

Physical Risk Considerations

Field operations are inherently high-risk; they occur in an environment that is often fluid and can evolve very rapidly. Risk management is an ongoing process that begins with the initiation of an investigation and ends with the final debriefing. Risk management considers the operational objective against the risk exposure.

Task force *physical* risk management policies should be in place to guide decision making in known high-risk situations, such as:

- Undercover contact with violent gang members (utilizing undercover officers or informants).
- Field contacts/interviews with gang members.
- Raids and search warrants.
- Arrest scenarios.

In proactive investigative strategies, the task force often has control of many of the conditions that will affect risk. The task force can plan the operation or contact and often decide when the operation/field contact will take place, where the operation/field contact will take place, and under what conditions the operation will proceed or terminate. In some cases, ***risk avoidance may be the prudent tactical option.***

Risk Manager

Every field operation should have one person dedicated to evaluating the changing conditions and determining if and when the risk outweighs the objectives of the operation. Similar to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)-required site safety officer, the risk manager is responsible for safety considerations throughout the field operation. The operation risk manager should be identified by name on the written operational plan. The risk manager is responsible for the ongoing assessment of the operation and has the authority to terminate the operation at any time.

Note: The role of risk manager is critical to conducting safe and efficient field operations and requires experience, sound judgment, and training. For more information, consult the Institute for Intergovernmental Research® (IIR), Center for Task Force Training™ (CenTF) Program section on Risk Assessment and Management.

Guideline 15: Training

Develop a rigorous training program for all task force personnel

Providing appropriate training for task force personnel is an important element of a task force strategy that is too often overlooked. Task force operations are inherently complex, sensitive, and dangerous. Successful operations require personnel who possess the skills to handle the myriad of complex issues they will face.

Because task force personnel come from a variety of organizational backgrounds and cultures, they also possess varied levels of experience and hold different professional values. Mandating that all task force personnel complete a rigorous task force training program will promote greater consistency, efficiency, professionalism, and safety in task force administration and operations.

The core of a task force training program is the task force policies and procedures manual (see Guideline 6—Policies and Procedures). New personnel (sworn and nonsworn) should receive detailed training on all aspects of the manual. In addition, all personnel should receive annual "refresher" training to reiterate the most critical components of the manual, cover any changes to the manual, and highlight policies or procedures that address timely issues (e.g., a recent unsuccessful operation or safety infraction). Special consideration should be given to high-risk training. Further, all task force and gang unit training should be cataloged and documented. Ongoing informal training should also be provided, for example, by reinforcing positive performance or addressing mistakes during operational "debriefings." Additionally, line officer training should be provided, potentially utilizing roll call or in-service training, regarding the gang task force and/or intelligence unit. This training may include the purpose of the task force/unit, types of information that may be beneficial to the unit, and how to contact the unit.

Administration of the task force training program should include a collection of written training materials for all training curriculum, including lesson plans, course materials, and supplemental readings. These materials should be updated annually, after annual updates are made to the policies and procedures manual. The training program administration should also include a detailed documentation of all training completed by task force personnel to ensure that members of the task force complete all of their requisite training.

Subjects that should be considered for incorporation into task force and gang unit training program curriculum may include:

- Task force mission statement.
- Task force policies and procedures manual.
- Personnel roles and responsibilities.
- Data collection policies.
- Case management policies.
- Operational planning policies.
- Confidential informant policies.
- Risk management policies.
- Field Training Officer (FTO) model for newly assigned officers.
- Orientation and task force expectations.
- Basic/advanced gang investigations.
- Basic/advanced narcotics investigations.
- Tactical training.
- Operational planning.
- Entry/hostage rescue.
- Officer-down drills.
- CI/undercover officer extraction.
- Buy-and-bust operations.
- Firearms (designed to promote consistency within the task force).
- Defensive tactics.
- Surveillance tactics.
- Trauma treatment.
- Evidence handling.
- Financial investigations.
- Sexual harassment.
- Equal Employment Opportunity guidelines.
- Searches and seizures.

In addition to being trained on the standard curriculum, task force supervisors and managers also need specific training associated with the leadership and planning roles they hold. Supervisors and managers must be educated to respond appropriately to the unique challenges and situations posed in the task force environment. In a single agency, members generally accept the paramilitary authority of command positions; in a task force environment, leadership authority is generally "granted" by the participating agencies. Task force supervisors and managers must therefore develop a proper balance between "leadership" and "command."

Specialized Training

Task force supervisors and managers should consider receiving special training in:

- Leadership.
- Supervisory obligations to communicate and work with parent agencies.
- Risk assessment and risk management.
- Budget planning and management.
- Grant reporting and fiscal responsibilities.
- Specific responsibilities regarding labor contracts of participating agencies.
- Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and labor laws.
- Personnel management and performance-related obligations.

The importance of regular and task force-specific training cannot be overstated. This training must address the duties and responsibilities of the specific role and assignment. In a civil action, the court may use the following three criteria when determining liability:

1. Failure to train—was training provided?
2. Was the training adequate (for the role/assignment)?
3. Was the training current and relevant? Did it meet current standards?

Maintaining detailed task force training records (documentation of all task force training provided) is a good general practice to ensure that all personnel are receiving the requisite training, but such documentation could be critical in a defense against civil litigation or public scrutiny directed towards the task force.

Guideline 16: Funding

Explore funding needs and identify multisource funding options

Task force success over the long term will depend on the ability to marshal adequate financial resources to conduct effective and safe operations. Finding sufficient funds is often a challenge because participating agencies are already dealing with overstretched budgets. In addition, funding from federal and private grant programs, while imperative, is not guaranteed and therefore is an unreliable sole source.

Task force policymakers must be committed to finding multiple reliable funding streams to ensure that task force operations can continue without interruption and that task force personnel can operate with all of the support resources that they need to be successful.

Task force funding categories generally include:

- Personnel expenses—salaries, overtime, benefits, etc.
- Equipment—vehicles, communication, personal safety equipment, technical equipment, computers, etc.
- Confidential/investigative funds—purchase of evidence, purchase of information, purchase of services, etc.
- Support services—facilities, utilities, IT support, travel, training, etc.

The following elements should be considered when exploring how to fund the task force:

- The budgetary requirement of any task force operation will be closely linked to the mission and investigative strategies of the task force.
- Determine the fiscal resources available within the participating agencies to determine whether additional funding resources must be acquired.
- Consider resources available throughout the community that may support the task force budgetary requirements (e.g., corporate partnerships, community partnerships, nonprofit partnerships, and other vested stakeholders).
- Partner with other governmental agencies to leverage existing funds that have been dedicated to gang responsibilities (if available):
  - Dedicated gang funding through the U.S. Attorneys' Offices
  - Local and state prosecutors
  - G.R.E.A.T. Program—Office of Justice Programs (OJP), Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA)
  - Project Safe Neighborhoods—administered by BJA
  - Safe Streets Initiative—FBI
  - Local school safety funds
- Determine whether investigations and task force activities meet the criteria for "case-specific funding" support programs:
  - Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF)

- Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS)
- Other case-specific funding programs (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD])

- Consider grant funding opportunities and their specific obligations. While grant programs provide supplemental funds, they carry obligations and guidelines regarding use of the funds that should be considered.
  - Grant funds require strict fiduciary and reporting responsibilities.
  - Specific obligations of the grant may impact decisions regarding “target selection” and “jurisdiction” of enforcement activities.
  - Examples of grant opportunities include:
    - Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program funds
    - HIDTA funds
    - Direct funding grants (both state and federal)
    - Discretionary grant programs
    - Weed and Seed grant programs
    - Grant program funding information sites:
      - Institute for Intergovernmental Research www.iir.com.
      - Federal registry Web site www.grants.gov.

Guideline 17: Performance Measurement

Establish a system to monitor the results of task force operations

Traditionally, task force operations have been measured by the numbers of arrests and seizures. Performance measures have rarely been clearly linked to the task force mission statement. As a result of this deficiency, law enforcement has not been able to adequately document the task force impact on the stated mission.

Many federal programs currently utilize a more inclusive evaluation measurement tool known as the Program Assessment Rating Tool, or PART.[26] The PART evaluation is a comprehensive model that examines "inputs" (manpower, money, and other resources), the "process" involved (task force operations/activities), "outputs" (arrests/seizures) and, ultimately, the "outcomes" of the program. The "outcomes" document the demonstrated impact the program has had on the stated mission. Specifically, the PART process is intended to evaluate the **results** of the program—what difference the program makes or what effect the program has had.

The task force should establish a performance measurement system that considers both outputs and outcomes connected to the task force mission. Some grant funding programs may require that the recipient be rated in a manner consistent with the PART measurement tool; therefore, adopting a performance measurement system similar to the PART is highly recommended.

Examples of traditional statistical "output" measurements include:

- Cases initiated/investigated.
- Gang members arrested.
- Drugs seized.
- Guns seized.
- Assets seized.
- Search warrants served.
- Community and law enforcement education programs delivered.
- Intelligence meetings hosted/attended.
- Number of entries into the intelligence database.
- Number of gang members who have left their gang.

"Outcome" Measurements

While it may be difficult to measure long-term impacts of the task force program on the gang problem, it is possible to measure intermediate outcomes that reflect progress. Examples of "intermediate outcome" measurements include:

- Percentage of arrested gang members that are prosecuted.
- Percentage of those prosecuted that are convicted.
- Gang member sentencing.
- Length of incarceration of convicted members.

26 Executive Office of the President of the United States, Office of Management and Budget, Program Assessment Rating Tool, www.whitehouse.gov/omb/part.

- Gangs/criminal enterprises disrupted or dismantled.
- Intelligence information shared.
- Identification and referral of at-risk youth to governmental and nongovernmental community diversion resources.
- Diversion of some gang members and at-risk youth to alternative corrections programs (i.e., boot camps or other alternative programs in lieu of prison incarceration).
- Results of preliminary and subsequent community surveys regarding gang problems.
- Results of preliminary and subsequent school surveys regarding gang problems.
- The impact on gang-related crime in areas of task force operations that ***can be documented*** (this requires a baseline analysis that can be used for comparison).

Conclusion

It is important to keep in mind that developing a gang task force and intelligence unit is not a linear process. The preceding guidelines cannot simply be followed strictly one after another because of their interconnectedness. For example, developing the mission statement and design involves the cooperation of participants, but full participant identification cannot occur until after the general mission has been established.

Therefore, it is recommended that the entity which is initiating the task force and intelligence unit develop a skeleton framework to use in garnering interest from other participants and support from community stakeholders. This framework should be a living document that is continuously revised until all participants are identified and a consensus can be reached on the final mission, design, policies, and procedures.

Building any multijurisdictional effort can be a huge challenge. However, there is an abundance of proof that it can be done and done well. There are many successful gang task forces currently operating across the country. New task forces should reach out to the successful organizations to identify their best practices and find out what they did to overcome their challenges.

NAGIA asserted that "because of the violent nature of gang members…the sharing of information among criminal justice professionals has become an issue of public safety."[27] Multijurisdictional task forces are a proven system for effective information sharing and coordinated operations to mitigate gang crime. The 17 guidelines laid out in this document are intended to assist local law enforcement agencies in building the requisite structural framework for a successful gang task force and intelligence unit operation. We hope you have found this document to be a useful tool.

27 National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations, *2005 National Gang Threat Assessment,* www.nagia.org/PDFs/2005_national_gang_threat_assessment.pdf.

Guideline 1 Task Force Model

Determine the optimal model for a task force by identifying response needs

Guideline 2 Task Force Participants

Determine key agencies to participate in the task force

Guideline 3 Task Force Mission

Define the task force mission and create a written mission statement

Guideline 4 Task Force Design

Determine requisite organizational elements of the task force

Guideline 5 Memorandum of Understanding

Draft a memorandum of understanding for task force operations

Guideline 6 Policies and Procedures

Develop a comprehensive task force policies and procedures manual

Guideline 7 Personnel

Develop guidelines for selecting and managing task force personnel

Guideline 8 Data Collection

Establish gang crime data criteria and develop a data collection system

Guideline 9 The Intelligence Process

Incorporate the intelligence process into gang intelligence activities

Guideline 10 Case Management

Establish a process for selecting and managing cases for the task force

Guideline 11 Operational Planning

Develop operational plans for every operation involving suspect contact

Guideline 12 Critical Incident Response

Prepare the task force for responding to critical incidents

Guideline 13 Confidential Informants

Develop policies for managing and controlling confidential informants

Guideline 14 Risk Management

Develop policies to mitigate physical and professional risks

Guideline 15 Training

Develop a rigorous training program for all task force personnel

Guideline 16 Funding

Explore funding needs and identify multisource funding options

Guideline 17 Performance Measurement

Establish a system to monitor the results of task force operations

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